

## Day 1: The Unbeliever (10 words)

While his passengers, geologists, searched the shoreline for traces of heavy metals, Dylan left the helicopter and explored the island.

He spotted a coral slab, decorated with incised characters, uprooted it from the sand and slipped it into his overall pocket.

Something blue and white protruded from the side of a dune, scoured away by a cyclone. Dylan tugged and freed a broken bowl from the clutches of a bony hand.

He saw two more skeletons, entombed in the earth wall, knees drawn to chests, both holding pieces of porcelain. *The drowned crew of a sunken treasure ship?* Back in South Africa, he'd get someone to decipher the coral inscriptions and date the pottery.

He eased the ceramic shards from the skeletal hands and looked up, straight into a pair of furious eyes, glaring from the sockets of a bleached skull.

Not a zombie, it was an African woman, face covered in white paste.

Shaking, Dylan raised a hand in greeting.

That got her going. Arms waving, she screeched at him.

*Nuts! Better get back to the chopper.*

The woman followed him to the helicopter, ignored the Chinese geologist, and targeted the Mozambican instead.

“What’s with the spooky mask and why’s she bitching?” asked Dylan.

“She’s a Makua, a white face used to signify virginity, now it’s a beauty aid,” said the black man. “And you’ve been grave robbing.”

Dylan showed them the coral and the broken china.

“Those bowls were buried with drowned people,” said the Mozambican. “It’ll anger their spirits that you’ve taken them.”

He pointed to the coral. “Foreign sailors left that marker to appease the spirit of someone whose body wasn’t found for proper burial. By removing his gravestone you anger his ghost.”

The other geologist nodded, “The porcelain and inscriptions are Chinese. My people say shui gui, spirits of drowned people, whose bodies weren’t recovered for proper burial, haunt where they drowned, waiting to drown others to replace them as shui gui. Don’t anger the spirits. Put everything back.”

Dylan replaced the artefacts.

The woman, hands on hips, watched the helicopter depart for Angoche harbour on the mainland, taking the passengers to catch their connecting flight.

The geologists saw Dylan refuel and head back to South Africa.

“Will he land at the island for those relics?” asked the Mozambican.

The Chinese shrugged, “He’s an unbeliever.”

Somewhere between Angoche and Beira, Helicopter ZSVCU disappeared without trace.